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# Vocational Schools Leadership Reinforcement Model

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## ABSTRACT

Al-Qur'an is the main source and guideline in every worship and Muslim prayer. Similarly, how Islam provides basic understanding and concepts of leadership. In addition, vocational education is predicted to reduce unemployment among school graduates. Secondary vocational schools were blamed for failing to prepare students for the skilled workforce and eliminate the gap between the requirement of the industries and the competencies taught at school. This study examines school leadership reinforcement model for vocational secondary schools located in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara. This qualitative descriptive study employed development model for data collection. The observations and in-depth interviews were applied as prime data collection methods involving three (3) private and three (3) public vocational high schools. A total of 20 principals and senior school teachers participated in the study. The application of the school leadership reinforcement model requires the principals to have a clear vision in producing ready-to-work graduates. These supporting institutions can provide valuable inputs to enable schools to produce appropriate output that matched with the requirements of the industries. Strengthening the school leadership can be in the form of understanding of the local culture, benchmarking other schools, providing professional training, instilling good ethics and building strong character with high integrity.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Teacher; East Nusa Tenggara; Integrity; Holy Quran

## INTRODUCTION

In the Qur'an the leadership uses the word Caliph, Ulu al-Amri, Imam and Malik. The Caliph has a functional connotation of someone who is appointed as leader and ruler on the face of the earth carrying out certain functions and tasks. Ulu al-Amri is the owner of affairs or the owner of power. The priest is as everyone who can be followed and shown in the future in various problems. Whereas Malik means someone who has the authority to order something and forbid something in relation to a government. The Qur'anic argument about leadership is stated as say (O Muhammad s.a.w.): "O Allah s.w.t.! Possessor of the kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You will, and You take the kingdom from whom You will, and You endue with honour whom You will, and You humiliate whom You will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are Able to do all things (Al Quran3: 26).

In contrast, there are several research reports and articles about vocational education predicted to reduce unemployment among school graduates.

Central Statistics Agency (CSA) data shows that open unemployment in exist among graduates, with 17.26% from secondary vocational schools, 14.31% high school graduates, 12.59% graduates of universities, 11.21% diploma holders, 9.39% from secondary schools and 4.57% from primary schools. Secondary vocational schools were blamed for failing to prepare students for the skilled workforce and eliminate the gap between the requirement of the industries and the competencies taught at school. The quality of school leadership is nowadays directly associated with better academic success and higher achievement for every student (Sumintono, Sheyoputri, Jiang, Misbach, & Jumintono<sup>28</sup>). Leadership is a critical component of the organization's culture because leaders can create, maintain, or change the culture (Hinkin & Schriesheim<sup>13</sup>).

There are 188 Vocational High Schools (VHS) located in East Nusa Tenggara province. With a total number of 49,515 students and 6,665 teachers, with the ratio of 7.43 between students and teachers (Ditpsmk<sup>8</sup>).

This ratio is very far from the normal ratio determined by the National Standard of Education (NSE) i.e. 15-20 students for vocational schools. It needs an outstanding principal to run the school very well. This research focuses on the model for development of school leadership with reinforcement in vocational schools: a case study in East Nusa Tenggara Indonesia (developing countries context). As Widodo<sup>31</sup> presented that VHSs were not managed and led well to prepare the future of their students. The public needs quality VHS graduates who can face the challenges of the competitive working environment. Most of the VHS principals still face obstacles in maximizing human resources and other school resources. One of the reasons is weak leadership and low managerial capacity of the principal himself/herself. In general, the principal of the school is a key determinant in improving school quality. The principal of the school is the central point in increasing the high achievement and good performance (Leithwood et al.<sup>19</sup>). Strong school leadership is one of the keys to the success of the institution in achieving, maintaining, and improving school performance (Pont, Nusche, & Hunter<sup>25</sup>).

Central Statistics Agency (CSA) data shows that open unemployment for the year 2009 indicated that 17.26% were graduates of VHS, 14.31% were high school graduates, 12.59% were university graduates, 11.21% graduates of diploma, 9.39% were graduates of SMP, and 4.57% from primary schools. Even in the year 2012, unemployment in Indonesia reached 7.2 million people, mostly graduated from Vocational High School. Based on the level of educational qualification, unemployment among graduates of VHS was the highest in the country (9.87%), followed by graduates from Senior High School (SMA) (9.6%), graduates from Junior High School (7.76%), graduates from Diploma I / II / III (6.21%), graduates from university (5.91%), and from Primary School (3.64%) (BPS<sup>2</sup>). A school principal is a decisive factor in developing a high performing school. Principal effectiveness is crucial to improving student achievement, second only to classroom instruction among all the school-related factors contributing to what students learn at school (Nettles & Herrington<sup>24</sup>).

One of the formal studies on school leadership was conducted by Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP) in 2013. The samples of this study were selected from the relevant populations in some regions of Indonesia: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua. The result was a

number of key issues emerged from the analyses of school principal competency. Specific competency indicators in the study shows that rural and remote school principals generally rate their competency lower than urban or semi-urban principals including in East Nusa Tenggara. Thus, it is very important to conduct a study focusing on rural and remote school principal competency

The study is significant because the results of the study can be used by the relevant parties and authorities including the central and local office of education, school principals, and teachers to reinforce the quality of school leadership in rural and remote schools. In the past, despite the presence of ideas to revitalize rural schools, the relevant people were still in confusion as to where they could start the reinforcement process from. The research will hopefully provide the list of actions that should be undertaken by the relevant authorities to accelerate the process of reinforcement of school leadership in rural and remote school. The list will also highlight the actions that should be given priority.

The significance of this research also lies on the impact it can give to a wider rural and remote community especially to those who have a great interest in rural and remote education, particularly in Indonesia. One of the biggest impact is that this research is able to identify and inform the society and the relevant authorities regarding the actual conditions of vocational schools in Indonesia including the problems faced by these schools where action need to be taken urgently. Such important information can be used later as the means to formulate appropriate strategies to accelerate the process of reinforcement of school leadership in rural and remote school. The result shows that this research, at the same time, can give benefits to those affiliated with vocational schools such as rural and remote students. One of the significant benefit is that they have the opportunity to access quality education (as long as the problems concerned can be dealt well by the relevant authorities).

**Theoretical Overview: Leadership:** The concept of leadership stated in Al-Quran where men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has made one of them excel over the other, and because they spend out of their possessions (to support them). Thus righteous women are obedient and guard the rights of men in their absence under Allah's protection. As for women of whom you fear rebellion, admonish them, and remain apart from them in beds, and beat them. Then if



they obey you, do not seek ways to harm them. Allah is Exalted, Great (Al-Quran 4:34). The men chosen as the *qawwam* or *qayyim* where is a person responsible for administering and supervising the affairs of either an individual or an organisation, for protecting and safeguarding them and taking care of their needs. Thus, with the terminology of *imamah* that highlighted, and We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and (when) they were certain of Our signs (Al-Quran 32:24).

In addition, school leadership reinforcement in the ASEAN region, such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, are supported by the World Bank. Each country developed a national body for principals training and development since in the 1990s (Ndiga, <sup>3</sup>umiukha Catherine Khakasa, Flora, Ngugi, & Mwalwa<sup>23</sup>) school managers need to appreciate the new policies and laws that guide school management, namely Children's Act and Basic Education Act. Management of resources while ensuring accountability and integrity to the public is equally crucial. The reforms emanate from the Education changes brought about by the new constitution dispensation and the devolved system of Government. The managers of schools need to appreciate the new policies and laws that guide the management of schools such as: Education being a basic human right, therefore being free and compulsory and schools being disability friendly. There is also the element of participation which is important. Management of resources while ensuring accountability and integrity to the public is equally crucial. Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005 emphasizes improving quality completion rates both at the primary and secondary school level of education (MOE: 2005). This national body has subsequently trained thousands of school principals. Several empirical studies reported the complexities of these issues which informed on the diversities about what they taught or not taught in the training (Hess & Kelly<sup>12</sup>) the role of the governments (Thody, Papanoum, Johansson, & Pashiardis<sup>30</sup>) or even question about purpose and responsibility (Cowie & Crawford<sup>3</sup>). This shows the essential aspects of preparation for training before is appointed as a school principal, and the context of different cultures should also be taken into account (Yan & Ehrich, 2009). Following the preparation for training, the school principals, like other professions, have to undergo a leadership professional development program that helps them to become effective school leaders and improve

their practice from time to time (Cowie & Crawford<sup>3</sup>). The quality of program design, delivery, recruitment and retention in these professional 3 development activities must match the needs of the individuals (Hess & Kelly<sup>12</sup>) So the professionalism and reinforcement of the school management and leadership qualities are prerequisites before teachers are appointed to hold this position, including in all the provinces and districts in Indonesia.

**Education and Principal Study in Indonesia:** In the 1980s, the central government, who appointed public school principals throughout the country, introduced preparation training programs for school principal candidates. This preparation training program lasted <sup>2</sup>r one week although it was not compulsory. The content of the training program was mostly about public administration and management which was provided by the education province office staff. Before taking office, most of the public secondary school principals held posts as vice 4 principals and were chosen for posts by their school principals. Some of them had administrative training but not necessarily about school leadership.

A drastic change of managing education that was practiced in a centralistic manner since the colonial era occurred in 1998 when the New Order collapsed. The new government stipulated the autonomy law, where starting in 2001, the education sector was managed at the district level (Kristiansen & Pratikno<sup>17</sup>). This situation also is marked the beginning of an era of educational reform which was the enactment of the New Education System Law in 2003 (Raihani<sup>26</sup>). This was followed by the implementation of several new policies, such as school committee and education council (Sumintono et al.<sup>28</sup>), school operational support that does not differentiate between public and private school (Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti, & Hassan<sup>9</sup>), teacher certification program, and international standard school (Sumintono & Subekti<sup>29</sup>).

From the year 2001, the appointment of public school principals was devolved to the district level (either a city or a regent), as part of an active system of decentralization. Many education districts sought help from the central government or local universities to train future school principals. However, in most cases, they just appointed teachers based on their personal preferences. This action is not surprising as a longitudinal study by Hofstede (Hofstede<sup>14</sup>) Geert Hofstede proposed four dimensions on which the differences among national cultures can be understood: Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty

Avoidance and Masculinity. This volume comprises the first in-depth discussion of the masculinity dimension and how it can help us to understand differences among cultures. The book begins with a general explanation of the masculinity dimension, and discusses how it illuminates broad features of different cultures. The following parts apply the dimension more specifically to gender (and gender identity regarding Indonesia society cultural model found that higher hierarchical powers can decide anything they like).

Because of this situation and the fact of widening capacities of district governments, starting from the year 2009, the Ministry of Education released a regulation (number 6/2009) stating that before becoming a principal, school leadership training was required (MoNE<sup>22</sup>). As a result, a national agency name as Agency for School Principal Empowerment and Development (LP2KS) was established to provide this training (LP2KS<sup>20</sup>). This training program is called the Development of Principal Managerial Skill. The syllabus for the training contains areas includes student management, human resource management, curriculum development, school development planning, monitoring and evaluation, and information and communication technology in school. This training is supposed to be in line with the Ministry of Education decree number 13/2007 regarding principal standards, where a school principal in Indonesia has to be competent in five areas, which are personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision and social (MoNE, 2007). The first stage of the training is seven days training at the LP2KS (70 hours), located in Solo, Central Java; followed by three months (equal to 200 hours) on the job learning (OJL) (apprenticeship) in two schools (his/her own school and another school in his/her district) where participants are asked to prepare an action plan for change and improvement. The last stage of the process is three days training (30 hours) in the LP2KS which mostly consists of completing a portfolio of the activities undertaken during on the job learning and the presentation of the portfolio. Total time of this program is 300 hours lesson. Once principals have successfully completed all the training and assessment in LP2KS, the candidate will be awarded with a unique number of school principals' registration numbers (Nomor Unik Kepala Sekolah), which makes them eligible to be appointed as school principals by the mayor in their respective districts (LP2KS<sup>20</sup>).

There are several reports discussed on school principals that appeared in the international literature which portrayed and reflected the situation of post-1998.

It is interesting to note that even the minister of education in 2002, stated that "the Indonesian government less educate the school leaders to be independent in many aspects of school administration" (Sofo, Fitzgerald, & Jawas<sup>27</sup>). Further, from their study, Jones and Hagul (Jones & Hagul<sup>16</sup>) found that "school principals have little authority in running the school or in resource allocation, nor are they usually trained to manage or lead a school well". This situation is also captured in Bjork's (Bjork<sup>1</sup>) study which indicates that local authorities, which include school principals to district government, do not have enough capacity in terms of expertise and experience. Therefore they rely on a bureaucratic manner to handle challenges and opportunities of education autonomy. The result of this situation is that good practice such as shared-decision making and the empowerment of teachers most of the time did not happen as expected. In most cases, the school principals relied on their autocratic leadership's style (Sofo et al.<sup>27</sup>). In addition, one indication by Lee and Hallinger (Lee & Hallinger<sup>18</sup>) based on PIRLS research, found that Indonesian school principals have less time in terms of practicing leadership role in their schools, which affirms that their main emphasis is on school management as previously stated.

An empirical qualitative study by Raihani (Raihani<sup>26</sup>) which was based on successful school leadership perspectives, provided unique findings. With the involvement of three school principals from Yogyakarta, he found that all embraced "Islamic and cultural beliefs and values that underpinned their leadership...which were articulated in the school leadership and strategies" (p. 481). Raihani<sup>26</sup> developed An Indonesian Model of Successful School Leadership (AIMSSL). According to Raihani<sup>26</sup>, "propositions about successful school leaders are drawn in that they demonstrate ability in analysing the school contexts and situations both internal and external to school; visioning and setting strategies; having strong personal and professional values and respecting and aligning others' personal and professional values; developing strong teaching-learning characteristics including curriculum and instruction; fostering professional development of themselves and staff through methods such as intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and modeling; redesigning the organization including identifying and creating and/or changing the school cultures and modifying organizational structures; and building collaborative cultures in which the high involvement of the school's other stakeholders in the decision-making processes is exercised".



Two further quantitative studies were conducted in Sumatra, they are Lampung and Padang which have revealed new findings<sup>25, 26</sup>. The Lampung study found that teacher's job satisfaction improves if the school principals' decision-making style practice is rational, less dependent, and avoid intuitive, avoidant and spontaneous (Hariri et al.<sup>11</sup>). Meanwhile, Damanik's<sup>5</sup> study emphasized that the leadership behaviours of the school principals and its influence on elements of the school climate are important for school improvement, in this case, teacher self-efficacy, in the context of education reform.

In another study conducted by Jawas<sup>15</sup> in Malang, East Java, using the mixed-methods approach on instructional leadership, she found that there are four areas of improvement (curriculum, teachers' professionalism, learning facilities, and students' learning outcomes). In this regard, he found that instructional leadership actually supports the practices of managing, promoting, improving and assessing instruction by the school principals. However, this study found that the perception of principals and teachers were found to be different, and they do not necessarily lead to the increased frequency of practices that influence instructional improvement. The above study indicated that the spectrum of educational leadership practices happened in contemporary Indonesian schools. However, there has not been a single study done in the context of school principal preparation; thus, this study endeavors to fill in the gap.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on research and development model by Gall, Borg, and Gall's (Gall, Gall, & Borg<sup>10</sup>). A total of 20 respondents ranging from principal (P), vice-principal (VP) and senior teachers (ST) with 5–40 years of teaching experience were involved in the interview session. The interviews were conducted in approximately 30-45 minutes after the school hours.

The collected data were transcribed, coded and categorized following the emerging themes, and interpreted using inductive and deductive methods. This study will be conducted in the form of interpretive research where "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as an instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive" (Merriam<sup>21</sup>).

This study took place in three districts in East Nusa Tenggara province, there are Kabupaten Timor Tengah Selatan, Kabupaten Timor Tengah Utara and Kabupaten Kota Kupang. The researchers selected three public vocational school principals and three private vocational school principals located at three different places in East Nusa Tenggara. The schools were being selected based on the number of student populations and their achievements. The office of education located in those districts will be consulted in selecting the schools. The samples of this study consisted of a purposive sampling of 20 people the profile is shown in Table 1. The researcher collected data using three different techniques: interviews, observations and document analysis. The three different instruments were adopted to ensure that rich data and information can be obtained in this research (Creswell<sup>4</sup>).

All the participants (except the students) were be individually interviewed at the time and place convenient to both researchers and participants. The questions posed to the participants are meant to find answers to the research questions. All the interviews were be recorded using a digital tape recorder.

**Table 1: Respondent's Profile**

Demographics		Frequency	Per cent
Gender	Male	10	50
	Female	10	50
Profession	Principals	6	30
	Senior teachers	14	70
School location	City	12	60
	Rural	8	40
Age	Under 34 years	3	15
	35 - 39 years	2	10
	40 - 44 years	3	15
	45 - 50 years	4	20
	51 - 55 years	6	30
	more than 55 years	2	10
Tenure as principal	Under 2 years	2	10
	3 - 4 years	2	10
	5 - 8 years	6	30
	more than 8 years	10	50
Highest Education	Diploma IV	0	0
	Undergraduate	12	60
	Master's	8	40
	Doctorate	0	0

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Training	5 Agency for School Principal Empowerment and Development (LP2KS)	5	25
	Center for the Development and Empowerment of Educator and Staff (P4TK)	5	25
	Education Quality Assurance Agency (LPMP)	2	10
	Others	8	40

## RESULTS

The description of research data presented here is based on findings of interviews with involving twenty respondents from principals and senior teachers. Some school principals describe the model of school leadership strengthening that is applied in their respective vocational schools, as the respondent explained:

In this case under the provincial government, the Department of Education play the vital role as the principal of direct superior. The principal should work closed together and communicate with the teachers and parents in order to produce students who are able to perform well both in education and morals (P1). Similarly, another senior teacher from the different school stated:

The education office as the policy maker and the school community is only the executor (ST1).

The conclusion of the interview result is that all existing systems in schools are centralized from the provincial principal and teachers perform their duties that support student achievement and morals. Other school principals stated that the model of strengthening the school leadership is applied as follows:

The parents of the students and industries give feedback input to the principal who is the primary and public-facing representative for the school in assisting with admin, teachers, to process input from industries and parents in order to achieve the vision and mission (P2).

**The senior teacher stated that:** Vision and mission the school is made more focused and implemented in supporting the teacher's duties and teacher's role (ST3).

**The other senior teacher stated that:** A clear vision of vision mission will make the school work program more focused on quality of graduation (ST5).

The above statements highlight that principals have some traits of leadership, such as democratic and visionary leadership as well as collegial leadership. The parent has a role involving school programs. The role of the parents is not solely to send their school going children to be trained in school but also have a responsibility to their children at school. The most important from this interview is that the school's leader must have an established direction of the employability issue of the graduate students. Producing ready-to-work graduates is a clear vision of the principal.

**In other perspectives, other principals expressed their experiences of strengthening principal leadership as follows:** The principal is the main leader and have a responsibility in the school. In carrying out his duties, he or she is assisted by the vice principal, admin and other teachers in running the school show to ensure the vision and mission goal delivered (P4).

Other principal point of view mentioned that the model of strengthening the school leadership is good management skills in all the lines of their respective duties which can positively impact productivity of the school performance (P6).

The teacher stated the existence of togetherness and teamwork enable all the work programs to be implemented properly (ST7). The other teacher concludes that a good relationship and teamwork as well as clear vision and mission will result in an innovative program in educating the students and able to advise each other by giving soft reminder without conflict of interest and able to be professional to improve the school management (ST6).

It is concluded that the model of the principal above is the democratic leadership. Vice principal, administration and senior teachers are an important component in assuring quality in the school programme.

**Related to the training and other program enhancing school leadership, most of the respondents give good comments on the training methods:** The training conducted by the government are relatively useful; it makes us know more how to become a good leader, and also we understand the duties of a principal in many situations (P8).

Mostly the training that I follow can improve our competency in managerial and leadership, especially in the internship section (ST9).

The training is effective because they taught everything that I need to become a principal (P1).

These findings highlight how important the principal's leading professional training is in building school leaders. This is in line with international research findings that reinforce how being in a deputy role can significantly influence the subsequent leadership practice and behavior of future principals (Day, Sammons, & Gu<sup>7</sup>).

The findings indicated that school employs many leadership models. The application of these models depended on the influence of the existing situation. The application of the school leadership reinforcement model requires the principals to have a clear vision in producing ready-to-work graduates. The school leaders must set up creative and innovation institutions to support and produce output in accordance with the steady plan. These supporting institutions can provide valuable inputs to enable schools to produce appropriate output that matched with the requirements of the industries. Strengthening the school leaders can be in the form of understanding of the local culture, benchmarking other schools, providing professional training, instilling good ethics, and building strong character and high integrity.

In line with many studies of successful school leadership, the principal's leadership in this study was reinforced by a set of personal beliefs and values (Day, Harris, & Hadfield<sup>6</sup>; Raihani<sup>26</sup>). As the respondents said,

As a school principal, I don't know what I will be, but this is an "amanah" (trust) and given from God that I am responsible in my "akherat" (future) (P6).

Other principal said,

The principal is only a job position but also a trust given in my career path (P5).

Senior vice principal described his principal,

I know very well how my principal holds this vital position, he or she is very amanah (trusted) particularly in managing the money (VP4).

These statements, the beliefs, and values reinforces the importance of leadership of the principal in running the school.

## DISCUSSION

From the description and field data obtained will enable to assist how strengthening the leadership

of the principal can be formulated. The formula for strengthening the headmaster model is clearly how a leader can ensure the direction and motion of organisational behavior toward a very clear goal. The purpose of a vocational high school is how to ensure graduate students are ready for the work market. The ability to obtain good work for himself and for others. The models of school leadership reinforcement in East Nusa Tenggara can be described in Figure 1.

From the Figure 1 explained the principal plays its role in a central way. The principal is appointed in a special institution who is responsible for designing, formulating and describing the qualifications of graduates demanded by the market consistently in the school system. The fulfillment of school qualifications is monitored directly by National Working Competency Standard of Indonesia (SKKNI) and Indonesia National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) to ensures that the educational stage is carried out correctly.

How does the principal strengthen his leadership? In the picture is clearly mentioned some research findings that provide strengthening of leadership. Strengthening school leadership is an understanding of local culture, benchmarking, professional training, increased trust, strong character, and high integrity. The reinforcement received by the school will have an impact on the school's organizational system to design the needs of school graduates from the market demand, to determine postgraduate qualifications with the qualities and preparation of specific graduates before entering the workforce. The findings of models in remote areas, such as in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, became embryos for broader and more detailed developments because the number of students and understanding the needs of employees in world education.

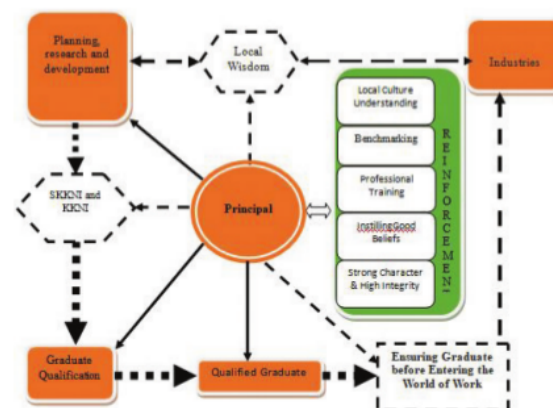


Figure 1: Model of school leadership reinforcement in East Nusa Tenggara



## CONCLUSION

In this study the principal leadership is found by using several models of leadership. The application of this model depends on the influence of the existing situation and conditions. In implementing the model of school leadership strengthening requires the principal to have a clear vision in producing graduates who are ready to work. School leaders can establish similar institutions of planning, research and development institutions to support and produce appropriate outputs of the Vocational High Schools (VHS) vision and mission. These supporting institutions can provide valuable inputs to enable schools to produce output that meets the requirements of the industries.

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